

Migration and Emulation – Methodology for Preserving Digital Records

The Georgia Archives intends to preserve all digital materials determined to be of historical value. However, proper preservation is expensive and requires substantial computing infrastructure and expertise not normally accessible to a state archival program. Therefore, the Archives will need to allocate priorities for action, based on the relative significance of materials and the technical complexity of ensuring access to them.

The Georgia Archives recognizes three options for the preservation of digital records over the long term - migration, emulation, and technology preservation. Technology preservation, or the preservation of original hardware and software, is not a viable option for the Georgia Archives. The Archives will rely on migration and emulation as its primary methodologies for the preservation of the state's digital records.

Policy

The Georgia Archives will seek to preserve the original bit stream of any historical record in the Digital Archives. However, where technology obsolescence is a concern and the record is at risk of loss, the Archives will move the records forward into a later or compatible software application or onto a new format of storage media. Such actions will be fully documented as part of the records' chain of custody.

If the record is in no danger, the Archives will continue to preserve the original bit stream. Migration may be precipitated by an access request from the public. Additionally, a request for access may necessitate emulation of the original software platform for research purposes. On-demand preservation will take place in order to facilitate accessibility.

In both instances, the cost and benefits will be considered to determine whether data preservation functions are best handled in-house or whether they can be outsourced effectively.